

“Anchored in Grace: Grace That Saves”

Psalm 146; Ephesians 2:1-10

September 29, 2024

Introduction

- Two sisters who lived their lives contentedly together got a windfall.
 - o One of the sisters won a lottery prize with \$1 million dollars.
- The two began arguing over the money.
- As the sister's fought, the money was largely spent on their fight and then, the sisters died, unresolved over the money.
- It's a sad story.
- It reminds us that sometimes, we can get things so wrong that our hearts become hardened to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- We can enter into dark times in which the light of Christ isn't shining very brightly around us.
 - o In fact, in these times, we can find ourselves to be churlish, unkind and just onery to other people.
 - It's just human nature, when we're hopeless or down, we just don't interact with life as brightly as we could.

Paul in Ephesians

- As Paul writes to the churches, he wants them to know some great news.
- That they've been acted upon. Forgiven by a merciful God through the life death and atoning work of Jesus Christ.
- But Paul doesn't sugarcoat their status prior to God's grace saving them.
 - o You were dead in your trespasses and sins.
 - That's what Paul wants us to see.
 - That a life of sin isn't really a life to begin with.
 - It's filled with enmity and envy, fear and anxiety, worry and wishfulness.
 - o It's a living death.
 - I know something about a living death having suffered with an alcohol addiction for years.
 - There was a point in my life where I was so hopeless that suicide seemed like a viable option.
 - o I really resonate with the story of the Prodigal son, especially wanting to eat the pig food he'd sunk so low.
- There are so many lost people out there.
- I think of a good buddy of mine.
 - o He's got money but he's got no happiness, no peace and no real hope.
 - I pray for him but he's really lost.
 - But it might be you today that's lost, don't miss that.
 - o You can be in church and not quite be found yet.
 - What's worse, is that he could have an amazing life in Christ but, for not, he's lost. Pray for him.
- I spent the week with a group of guys, some of whom are just as lost.
 - But let me tell you what did happen.
 - Hope emerged, despite the location.
 - o Hope arrived because this message came across, no matter what you've done or who you think you presently are, God loves you.
 - Beyond that, God in Christ has done something for you.
 - Christ died and your sins are forgiven.
 - o This message landed hard with the table and as such, by the end, there was much rejoicing.
- You see, those guys have an awareness every day that we lack.

- Because of the wrongness of their actions, these men spend their days enmeshed in the awareness of their errors.
 - And, in a way, that awareness is a good thing.
 - We don't get that. Not even for a second unless we're faithful.
 - We can avoid the awareness of our sinfulness.
 - Heck we can watch television, play with our phones, there are any number of distractions to keep us from reminding ourselves of our depravity.
- But there it remains and we can stay in darkness indefinitely.
- But the good news is that God doesn't let us stay there.
 - He is the Good Shepherd and won't allow His flock to stay lost for long. That's what it means to have a good shepherd.

Point Two – Grace doesn't just save us from our sins, it makes us ALIVE.

- This is the biggest one, we don't move from darkness to light without it being noticeable.
- I'll never forget Ryan, the first inmate I ever became friend with.
 - There's a point in the week where the guys get some real reminders that there are a lot of people out there praying for them and thinking about them.
 - For a lot of these guys, alone and abandoned by friends and families, this really works on.
- Ryan just broke down in tears, he really got that he was forgiven.
 - This is a young man, who in the darkness of drug addiction, went and robbed at gunpoint a number of stores and was serving 17 years for armed robbery.
 - He's now been released and has seen his daughter graduate from high school and head to college.
- Ryan will tell you, he's alive now where he once was dead in his trespasses and sins, just like we all were.
- To be brought from darkness into the light by Jesus Christ's grace and mercy is to experience the most profound transformation imaginable. In the darkness, we are lost—trapped in our sin, shame, and brokenness, unable to see hope or purpose. But when Christ's light breaks through, it shatters that darkness, illuminating the path to freedom. His grace reaches into the depths of our despair, pulling us from the pit and setting us on solid ground. No longer bound by the chains of our past, we are made new, washed clean, and given a fresh start. His mercy rewrites our story, turning what was dead into life, what was hopeless into hope, and what was empty into fullness. In His light, we find not only redemption but also a purpose far greater than we ever imagined, as He lovingly leads us forward, hand in hand, into a future shaped by His love.

Point Three – We are saved to do good works for Christ.

- This is the biggest point.'
- Our abundant life is found in following Jesus Christ.
 - Right here is where many of us get it wrong.
 - We feel the good feelings but don't find ourselves yet moved into a life-giving ministry.
 - This sews the seeds of our own darkness really.
 - Because the more and more you live for yourself, the more and more removed you are from the Holy Spirit.
 - The Spirit doesn't support selfishness, not at all.
- **Story: The Good Deeds of Bob Brenley** (August 25, 2011)
- Bob Brenley was a Major League Baseball player who, in one infamous inning, made four errors—the most ever in one inning at the time. His team was losing because of his mistakes, and he felt utterly defeated. But Brenley didn't let his failure define him. Later in the same game, he hit two home runs, including the game-winner. His story isn't just about the errors or the success—it's about how he responded after his failure. He didn't give up. He got back up and turned the game around.

- **Connection to *Ephesians 2:10*:**
- Like Brenley, we make mistakes. We've all fallen short, dead in our sins, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:1-3. But God's grace lifts us up. Through Christ, we are given a new start—a new life—and the chance to do something meaningful. God calls us not to dwell on our failures but to walk in the good works He has prepared for us (v.10). Just as Brenley responded to his errors with determination and effort, we are called to respond to God's grace by living a life of purpose, reflecting the light of Christ through our actions.
- You can close with an invitation for the congregation to see their mistakes as an opportunity to experience God's grace and to walk forward, doing good works as a reflection of the new life they've been given in Christ.